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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MAY 01, 2009

Summary: All Newspapers highlighted reports that "security forces gained control over Ambela heights after overcoming tough resistance" from militants in Buner. Newspapers reported that the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) "dismissed as unfounded fears about Pakistan's strategic assets falling into wrong hands." CENTCOM Commander Gen. Petraeus' remarks that the "next two weeks are critical to determining whether the Pakistani government will survive" received prominent display. Some major dailies highlighted a U.S. counterterrorism report which noted that "Pakistan continued to suffer from rising militancy and extremism in 2008." Today all mainstream newspapers highlighted President Obama's remarks about Pakistan that he made during a prime-time news conference in Washington. (PAS has drafted a Special Media Cable today to cater this coverage.)

Most major dailies ran editorials on the simmering tension and the bloody ethnic violence in the port city - Karachi. The center-right national English daily "The Nation" observed that "events reported on Thursday indicate that the ongoing violence is spreading to new areas, and is assuming new and portentous dimensions." The Islamabad-based daily "Pakistan Observer" editorialized that "some hidden hands have opened a new front in Karachi, clearly in an attempt to put more pressure on the Government and the law enforcing agencies." The mass circulation Urdu daily, "Jang," noted that "growing militancy in Malakand has necessitated military operation in the area. Security situation in Waziristan is also volatile. Enduring peace in those areas is directly linked with tranquility in the business capital of Pakistan, Karachi." End Summary.

News Stories

"Troops Wrest Key Heights From Buner Militants" "Dawn" (05/01)

"Security forces killed another 14 militants during their operation in Buner on Thursday, gained control over the Ambela heights after overcoming tough resistance and secured about half of the eight kms-long Ambela pass after clearing three militant positions. Military spokesman Maj-Gen Athar Abbas told a press conference that the operation was making good progress and militants' hideouts were being attacked with all available resources."

"Taliban Holding People In Sultanwas Hostage" "The News" (05/01)

"Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Maj-Gen Athar Abbas on Thursday said security around Daggar was increased to provide more security to the area people and to facilitate linkage

to the ground forces. The ISPR D.G. said the militants were still holding positions at Sultanwas and Pir Baba. 'People of Sultanwas are under great distress and have been held hostage, as they are not being allowed to move out of the area.'

"N-Assets Under Robust Custodial Control: JCSC" "Dawn" (05/01)

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) on Thursday dismissed as unfounded fears about Pakistan's strategic assets falling into wrong hands. A meeting of the committee presided over by its Chairman General Tariq Majid expressed full confidence in the robust custodial controls and multi-layered arrangements put in place to ensure fail-safe security of the assets."

"Next Two Weeks Critical To Pak Government's Survival: Petraeus" "Daily Times" (05/01)

"Commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Gen. David Petraeus has told U.S. officials the next two weeks are 'critical to determining whether the Pakistani government will survive.' FOX News reported on Thursday. 'The Pakistanis have run out of excuses ... [and are] finally getting serious' about combating the threat from the Taliban and Al Qaeda, said the general."

"N-Program Faces 35 pc Cut, Scientists Upset" "The News" (05/01)

"Pakistan's nuclear program is facing severe financial cuts, badly hampering some core classified projects, it is learned. A source told 'The News' that several development programs of the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, including some classified ones, have been slowed down and some even halted as the government has imposed an unprecedented squeeze. The classified side of the PAEC development budget saw a cut of almost 35 per cent while for the open development programs only 15 per cent of the budget has been released, thus affecting more than 30 projects. The source said that senior nuclear scientists and those holding key positions in the country's nuclear program apparatus were extremely upset with the situation and fear that the cut would badly damage the nuclear program and would tantamount to a quiet unannounced rollback."

"Pakistan Continues To Suffer From Extremism, Says U.S. Report" "Dawn" (05/01)

"Pakistan continued to suffer from rising militancy and extremism in 2008 and the United States remained concerned that FATA was a safe haven for terrorists, says a U.S. counter-terrorism report released on Thursday. Besides Al Qaeda, Afghan insurgents and terrorists associated with other groups were also operating from FATA, the report added. The report noted that international terrorist organizations, including Al Qaeda and its supporters, continued to operate and carry out attacks in Pakistan."

"U.S. To Boost Training Of Pakistani Forces" "The News" (05/01)

"The United States and Pakistan will likely discuss stepping up U.S. training for Pakistani security forces when President Asif Ali Zardari visits Washington next week, a U.S. official said in Washington on Thursday."

"Hillary Seeks \$497 Million For Pakistan" "Dawn" (05/01)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asked Congress on Thursday to approve \$497 million of emergency funds for Pakistan. In her opening remarks before the Senate Appropriations Committee, Secretary Clinton also said that a bill to triple U.S. assistance to Pakistan - \$1.5 billion for a period of five years - would be presented in the U.S. Senate in a few days."

"Gates Urges Congress To Approve Aid To Pakistan Fast" "Daily Times" (05/01)

"U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates on Thursday pressed Congress to quickly approve \$83.4 billion for aid to Pakistan and for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Gates told lawmakers that money used to support Pakistan could run out by mid-May and some funds for other operations could start running out in July. 'I urge you to take up this bill and pass it as quickly as possible, but not later than Memorial Day (May 25),' Gates told the Senate Appropriations

Committee, which is considering the Obama administration's request."

"Pentagon Argues For Flexibility On Pak Aid" "The News" (05/01)

"Warning that any stringent conditions attached to the U.S. aid for Pakistan would be counterproductive, top Pentagon officials asked Congress on Wednesday to be flexible in a proposed legislation that would significantly expand economic and security assistance for the key anti-terrorism partner in South Asia. Appearing before the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, senior officials including Michele Flournoy, Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy, underscored the importance of bolstering Pakistan's counterinsurgency capability for enforcing security in the region bordering Afghanistan."

"'Capacity Gaps' Hampering War Against Terrorism: FO" "Dawn" (05/01)

"Pakistan said on Thursday its fight against extremism and terrorism was being hampered by 'capacity gaps' and regretted that the West was not helping it to meet the deficiencies. 'As far as our capacity is concerned, obviously there are gaps. For instance, we face shortage of helicopters as well as night vision equipment,' Foreign Office spokesman Abdul Basit said at his weekly media briefing. He said: 'We have been making approaches not only to the U.S. but to other major countries as well for the provision of the required equipment to counter terrorism and violent extremism.'"

"People Run For Their Lives As Operation Continues In Dir" "The News" (05/01)

"The people of Maidan area of Lower Dir district continued to leave their homes for safer places as the security forces continued targeting the suspected hideouts of militants with gunship choppers and artillery on Thursday."

"Taliban Destroy FC Camp, Seize Arms" "Dawn" (05/01)

"Militants blew up a camp of the Frontier Constabulary and took away weapons, while jets and helicopters continued heavy bombing on their suspected positions in different parts of Buner district on Thursday."

"Nizam-e-Adl In Two Days, Says ANP" "Daily Times" (05/01)

"Senior ANP leader Afrasiab Khattak announced on Thursday that the provincial government would enforce the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation in Malakand division within two days."

"NWFP Govt. May Unilaterally Set Up Darul Qaza In Malakand" "The News" (05/01)

"The NWFP government is set to unilaterally announce the establishment of the Darul Qaza in the Malakand division if Tehrik Nifaz Shariat-e-Muhammadi (TNSM) Chief Maulana Sufi Muhammad continues to ignore its requests for a meeting, while addressing a news conference in Peshawar on Thursday, NWFP Information Minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain said."

"U.S. Copters Violate Pak Airspace" "The News" (05/01)

"The United States gunship helicopters violated the Pakistan's airspace by intruding deep into Khyber Agency on Thursday, an official of political administration confirmed."

"U.S. Drone Attacks On Pakistan Fuel Anti-West Feeling: French Envoy" "The News" (05/01)

"The French Ambassador to Pakistan, Daneil Jouanneau, has said that the drone attacks are unacceptable as they kill innocent people besides fuelling anti-western and anti-U.S. feelings in the region, said Daneil Jouanneau while talking to journalists in Quetta the other day."

"Diplomat Urges U.S., Britain To Plug Arms Smuggling Routes On Pak-Afghan border" "Dawn" (05/01)

"Every day some 70,000 to 75,000 Afghans cross over the Durand Line into Pakistan, they all look alike and every one of them could be mistaken for a Taliban but they enter our country without let or hindrance on either side of the border, claimed Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner Asif Durrani. He was speaking at a panel discussion on 'Pakistan and Afghanistan: Strategies for the future', organized by National Union of Pakistani Students & Alumni (NUPSA) at the London School of Economics on Wednesday evening. He was highly critical of the West and the U.S. for turning a blind eye on the drug menace which he said was actually funding the Taliban war efforts."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Things Falling Apart," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/01)

"Events reported on Thursday indicate that the ongoing violence is spreading to new areas, and is assuming new and portentous dimensions.... Meanwhile, Washington continues to add to the country's manifold problems. There was yet another drone attack in South Waziristan on Wednesday, killing 10.... The attacks spread hatred and foil Pakistan's attempts to isolate the Taliban and Al Qaeda."

"Who Plans To Open Karachi Front?," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/01)

"As if happenings in FATA, Malakand Division and Balochistan were not enough, some hidden hands have opened a new front in Karachi, clearly in an attempt to put more pressure on the Government and the law enforcing agencies.... It is not clear who engineered the tension at this critical time but there can be no two opinions that E those behind the plan are definitely enemies of the country.... One fails to understand what land mafia wants to achieve by creating city-wide trouble and how it has become so powerful to disrupt the normal life.... It is ironical rather shameful that the Government has become helpless before mafia of different sorts."

"All Parties Must Sit Together To Restore Peace In Karachi," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (05/01)

"Growing militancy in Malakand has necessitated military operation in the area. Security situation in Waziristan is also volatile. Enduring peace in those areas is directly linked with tranquility in the business capital of Pakistan, Karachi. If disturbance continued in the metropolis, it will become almost impossible for the government to control security situation in insurgency-hit parts of the country."

"Karachi Violence," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (05/01)

"It seems that this is a conspiracy to create unrest in the country, as already the Taliban are challenging the writ of the state in Malakand and other tribal areas. At the time when the whole country is facing a civil war-like situation, the violence in Karachi is a conspiracy to create problems not only for the country but also for the people."

"State within A State," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/01)

"Over the past weeks it has become obvious the Taliban are engaged in a game of plunder. This too is how they inspire desperate young men to join them. The motive is base greed and not religious zeal."

"Life Comes To Standstill In Karachi; Little Help More Demands," an editorial in Hyderabad based liberal and independent daily "Kawish" (Cir. 105,000) (05/01)

"Peace, people, security, and even the law are hostage to the

terrorists and their deadly weapons. Government knows very well as who is behind these violent acts, but political expediency and administrative limitations do not permit them to take any effective action. We urge government to fulfill its responsibility of protecting the lives of people in the city."

"Ethnic Violence In Karachi," an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (05/01)

"It seems that it is a deliberate attempt to create law and order situation in Karachi, as Pakistan cannot stand turmoil following unrest in FATA, Balochistan and Swat. People of Pakistan look forward that the government will deal with the miscreants and arsonists in Karachi sternly."

"Latest Conspiracy Against Pashtoon In Karachi," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (05/01)

"Those people who are aware of the past history of Karachi, know that the current violence is a wicked plan to expel Pashtoon community from Karachi and destroy their possessions. And MQM was planning for this scheme for quite some time. Its (MQM's) recent hue and cry of the so-called 'Talibanization' threat in Karachi was a part of that plan to defame Pashtoon people who are living in Karachi. Perhaps, they (MQM) feel threatened with the growing economic power of the Pashtoon community."

"Violence In Karachi And Administrative Insensitivity," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/01)

"Violence in Karachi shows that the writ of the government does not exist there and that anyone who wants, can take the law in their hands.... If the government machinery does not bring the ongoing violence under control immediately, this fire may spread to other areas. NWFP, FATA and the tribal areas are already up in flames, God help this country if the Karachi riots spread to other parts of the country."

"Concrete Steps Needed To Restore Peace," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (05/01)

"Poverty and unemployment are a time bomb for Karachi, similarly, if the government keeps other basic issues in mind only then will we be able to return Karachi its lost identity of being a mini-Pakistan [with various ethnicities]."

"Karachi Blows Up Again," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/01)

"The possibility of someone hiring criminals to do drive-by motorcycle killings cannot be ruled out, but all signs and tokens in Wednesday's killing spree point to the persisting tensions between the MQM on the one hand and the ANP and the PPP on the other."

"Make Sincere Efforts To Solve The Balochistan Issue," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/01)

"It is unfortunate that bowing to U.S. wishes, the army and the government have embroiled themselves in Swat and the Tribal areas. And perhaps this is what the U.S.-India-Israel axis of evil wants.... How grave the situation in Balochistan is can be judged from the Governor Magsi's statements and PPP Balochistan Chief Lashkari Raisani's resignation. Hence the government must immediately call an all parties conference and plan the implementation of recommendations by the national leaders made earlier to meet the just demands of Baloch people."

"Solve Issues Through Talks, Not Bullets," an editorial in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (05/01)

"Problems are not solved through bullets. The people of Balochistan, Swat and the tribal areas have been deprived of their basic rights for a long time. They need basic amenities, economic progress and better lives. There will be unrest as long as these rights are deprived to them."

"Withdrawing Troops From Eastern Border," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/01)

"The troops taken from the western border to counter the perceived threat from India have now been returned to its earlier position. The U.S. and the U.K. are endeavoring to convince Pakistan that India is not involved as much in terrorism in Pakistan as it thinks. Even after the production of 'evidence' of Indian interference, the reaction from the U.S. is that Pakistan has not proved its case."

"Biden's Misperception," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/01)

"He (Biden) wrongly attributes Pakistan's perception of India as being a cultural hang-up. However, Pakistan cannot ignore the facts on the ground that keep reminding it of India's continued hostility. New Delhi has consistently tried to frustrate Islamabad's attempts at settlement of disputes and forge some kind of an equation to achieve a measure of good-neighborliness.... If the Americans want its wholeheartedly attention to defeat the militants, they would have to view the scenario dispassionately and not pander to the Indian wishes."

"Afghanistan: The Mother Of All Militancy," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/01)

"Taliban have gained enough strength and support among the local population that they control almost entire countryside restricting the writ of the puppet government and occupation forces to major cities and military bases. It is becoming more and more clear that while U.S. waged war in Afghanistan temporarily dislodged Taliban government but it has not necessarily defeated them and also could not liberate the people there.... If the U.S. is genuinely interested to bring an end to terrorism and extremism, it must draw up an exit strategy from Afghanistan, the mother of militancy, so that no ground was left with the Taliban to take up arms or indulge in violent activities."

"Who Will Teach The Army The Virtues Of The Long Haul?," an op-ed by Ayaz Amir in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/01)

"We are as abrupt with our peace deals as with our military operations. Into both we plunge hastily and, more often than not, unthinkingly.... Talibanism is not a surface disease. It is rooted in history, missed opportunities and repeated bouts of folly. It is not going to go away or be defeated by quick-fix military actions - actions which wax and wane as the moon does. This struggle requires nothing less than a revamping of the way we have been running, or rather mismanaging, Pakistan. It requires a change in our basic thinking.... We either rise to the challenge we face by reinventing Pakistan. Or we remain the way we are, waiting resignedly for whatever awaits us."

"Dangerous Games," an op-ed by Dr. Masooda Bano in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/01)

"How the Taliban can keep taking over districts of NWFP without some systematic support is difficult to understand. These swings between giving in completely as done in Swat and then following with military operations that kill 50 (with no accountability of who they were) in Buner is a perfect recipe for disaster. The PPP government has to answer why it is following such a dangerous strategy."

"Taking Back Buner And Dir," an op-ed by Najmuddin A Shaikh in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/01)

"The point is that Buner and Lower Dir do indicate that the penny has dropped for all power centers in Pakistan and they are determined to fight this menace with all the means at their disposal. The army, hopefully, will not stop its operation until it has disarmed the Taliban. But to be able to continue this operation, the army and the government will need public support and for that the media has to play a far more constructive role than it has been inclined to play so far."

"The Confused State," an op-ed by Ejaz Haider in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/01)

"Interestingly, while we have decided to go round in circles on the issue of how the state should respond to the internal threat, the Taliban are very clear on the issue of effective control and sovereignty. They tell the state that carrying weapons is their Islamic right, and we nod. But why is it that in areas under their control they would not allow anyone but their cadres to carry weapons; or allow anyone to do anything without their express approval?... Simply, they know that governance, to be effective, needs complete control of territory and population. They do not have to bear the cross of those nuances that weigh down liberal-democrats and liberal democracies.... They have learnt it by fighting the state; a state that still refuses to accept the danger it faces."

"It's Too Much Now," an op-ed by Yasir Ali Khan in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/01)

"The success percentage of the U.S. predator strikes thus comes to not more than six percent. Despite doing more than enough Washington still is asking Islamabad to 'do more' to dismantle the terrorists safe havens operating on its soil.... Can America 'who claims to be champion of democracy' or Taliban 'who claims to be protector of our religion' tell who has won 'what' or who has lost 'what' in this bloodbath? Can they answer that who will compensate to those thousands of innocent Pakistani civilian who died in this mayhem? What would make happy to those families who lost their kids and kins?"
Feierstein